Hi. Thanks for answering my call for people to interview about Flash games. I have a bunch of questions outlined below and the more in-depth your answers, the better, but please don't feel pressured to answer every one of them.

Please note in this list of questions: when I ask you about "Flash games" specifically, I mean the ones released in-browser between 1999 and 2021. If you're still making games with Flash, great! I'd like to hear about it. But since this book is mainly focused on Flash games in the browser, I'd like answers based around that context.

Personal History

- **Tell me about yourself.**
  My name is Adam Saltsman, and I'm the co-founder and studio director here at Finji, a game developer and publisher located in Grand Rapids, MI.
- **What Flash games did you make?**
  The highest profile game I got to make was for sure Canabalt, which I built with my friend Danny Baranowsky. We also made Fathom and Gravity Hook. Oh and I made all the games for Dikembe Mutombo Saves the World, which was a big collab with W+K, Powerhouse, Paul Veer, Sven Ruthner, Robin Arnott, and Jukio Kallio. Oh and Cubic Space which was a collab with Doseone. I made Alphabet with Keita Takahashi, Asuka Sakai, Jordan Fehr, and my partner Bekah, although I don't think we ever did a browser version of it. Same for Capsule, which I made with Robin Arnott. Oh and I made the video player for Indie Game the Movie on Steam. Those were all the biggest projects anyways. That I can remember.
- **How else were you involved in the Flash community?**
  I authored Flixel, a game dev library that was used in a *lot* of Flash games.
- **What was your first Flash game that you played, and on what site?**
  I can't say with a high enough level of confidence probably, but I'd bet it was something on Newgrounds or maybe Homestar Runner? But I think Alien Hominid was the thing that made me go "wait, what, how".
- **What do you remember about the community? How they interacted, voted, shared games with eachother?**
  It was awesome, mostly! I was more on the dev side of the community, I think, and it was really formative for me.
- **What are your favorite Flash games? Both massive and obscure.**
  I feel like I always blank on something good or obvious here, so I'll just go to my most reliable shoutout which is Redder by Anna Anthropy.
- **What was your favorite portal and why? Any runner-ups?**
  I mean nothing can top Newgrounds.
- **What would you consider your strongest memory of Flash gaming? It doesn't have to be necessarily the best.**
  One time me, my friend and mentor Ivan Safrin, FEZ creator Phil Fish, Aquaria and FEZ contributor Brandon McCartin, probably someone else too, we made a whole game in about 30 minutes, sitting on an old sofa in the bar at a chiptune music festival venue, in the middle of a NYC blizzard. We were not super sober, and we made a game about trying to drunkenly toast each other with small hamburgers? It had voice acting and everything. The name drops are not the important thing here, for me it was kind of the first time I was able to like … make a game so fast it could

be part of a joke in a conversation? In that place and time, that was just incredible to me.

- **Do you remember any portals, users or general stories that a casual community member might not know of? I'd love to get some more obscure stories into the book.**
- **Overall, what is your favorite part of Flash games, major or minor?**
  Being able to whip something up fast, and share it with friends and/or the whole world, to me made (and still makes) it one of the most powerful creative tools I've ever used. It really got at the essence of like… how and why to make interactive stuff.

Developing for Flash

- **What made you consider developing a Flash game?**
  It was when websites started using games as part of their advertising, I was able to get some paid work putting stuff together for a like… company that sold windshield wiper fluid. The programmer on that project, Ivan Safrin, later walked me through how to write and compile my own Flash games, which I would run on the Wii browser, of all things.
- **How difficult was it for you to get started?**
  It was so fast and easy, but I also had a great teacher!
- **What was the first Flash game you released, and on what site? What do you remember about its release?**
  Yea it was for sure the windshield washer fluid game, or maybe the ummm a like virtual marbles simulation I did for a documentary promotion. Probably the first like indie "game" I did that got posted anywhere was a little kind of demonstration of ActionScript3 that I did called Nano, where I did everything, the art and sound effects and music. It was, I'm not joking, like less than 40 seconds of gameplay.
- **What drew you to making Flash games specifically? Did other platforms like Shockwave, Unity, Java or so on carry any appeal?**
  Well Unity didn't exist yet, and I'd worked in Java before, and even Silverlight, but when ActionScript3 came out that was that for me. The perfect mix of reasonable power and total messiness. So fun.
- **Did you work alone? If not, who did you work with, and how did you meet them?**
- **Can you give me just a quick, point-by-point overview of how you developed games? The technical side of things purely - how you program for Flash, how you create resources like graphics & sound (if applicable), how functionality improved & things changed in later versions of Flash, anything you can think of that might be noteworthy or interesting to the nerdy-minded.**
  I did the majority of my development in Flash Builder, which was a kind of adaptation of the Eclipse open source IDE iirc.
- **Were there any interesting technical challenges you had to face while making a game in Flash?**
  The big thing (and this is something that's still true even in Unity) was learning to bulk process and cache my own data, and to try to pull my stuff into my own main loop instead of relying on Flash's life cycle. I ended up taking this so far as to like… write load-time routines that could generate sprite sheets of pre-rotated sprites, so they

could be blitted to buffers with no real-time cost. That kind of thing! And then delta frames, don't even get me started on delta frames and fixed framerates...

- **What was the development community like? Any forums or boards or other sites that are worthy of mention?**
  TIGSource was my home away from home online for sure.
- **Did you make games as a hobby, on the side, or a full time job? Did it ever get 'serious', and if so, when?**
  All of the above. Gravity Hook opened a couple of small doors for me, but around the same time I accidentally worked on a pretty popular Boggle clone for iPhone. About a year later was Canabalt, and then that was I think when things got serious. I didn't earn my first year of game industry *salary* until about 10 years after that, though. Making games for a living is tricky!
- **What was your first "viral game", what were the circumstances around it, and what was it like inside your head and on your site/portal entry when it did go viral?**
  It was expensive, even though the game was only 3MB (which was basically the one MP3 file in Canabalt), I think the first month of traffic from our self-hosted site was like 1.5TB. In 2009 that was kind of pricey!!
- **Did you ever have a strategy when making games, marketing or business wise? Or did you just work on what was fun?**
  All of the above. A better answer will take too long to type out sadly.
- **What was it like working with Flash portals like Kongregate? What sort of deals would you make, if any? Did you ever use something like Flash Game License, and if so, can you tell me about your experience with it?**
- **How much did the community support you, and how did they contribute to your success?**
- **Were you around pre-and-post Macromedia era Flash? Are you able to draw a comparison between the two companies' handling of the technology?**
- **Do you think Adobe buying Flash at the end of the day caused more damage than it would have if Macromedia hadn't been bought out?**
  Flash Builder and ActionScript3 were great tools. Everything after that was pretty frustrating. Starling, 3D in general, mobile in general, gamepad handling, Linux stuff… just a mess.

The End of Days

- **At what point did Flash go into "freefall" in the public consciousness, in your point of view?**
- **Have you ever met anyone blatantly anti-Flash or anti-Flash games specifically? Did you try to change their mind? Were you successful?**
- **What didn't you like about Flash as a platform, either during its peak or fall? Anything specifically egregious worth mentioning?**
- **Around what point did Flash stop becoming profitable and/or getting enough back to cover development time? Did this make you want to stop making Flash games?**
- **How many people were still playing your games at the end? Did you ever find out overall total player numbers? Any thoughts on those numbers?**

- **Any opinions on the state of the indie gamedev industry, and what it was like compared to Flash at its rise & peak?**
  I think it's harder to get visibility and attention for neat and tidy little games now than it used to be. There's exceptions of course but I think something changed for sure.
- **How do you feel about Flash having gone away from browsers? Do you miss it? What do you miss the most about it?**
  I for sure miss having reliable, responsive, interactive audio and video in the browser. It was just such a good way to share interactive content. I think PICO-8 is probably the thing that I see most used like Flash now.
- **If you could do it all again, would you?**
  Oh hell yeah.
- **What have you been up to since Flash left the public consciousness?**
  A heady mix of parenting and developing PC and console titles! I helped ship Night in the Woods (esp the Demontower part), directed Overland, and got to help publish Chicory: A Colorful Tale, Wilmot's Warehouse, Feist, and Panoramical. Right now I'm working on Tunic and I Was a Teenage Exocolonist, and other new stuff that I can't talk about but am pumped about. Plus some personal games. Also skating haha.
- **What do you think of efforts like AwayFL and Ruffle? Do you think they might recapture the magic of Flash in the browser if ever completed?**
- **Speaking of recapturing the magic, how do you feel about HTML5 games today?**
- **How can we play your games now that Flash has been exorcised from most browsers?**
- **Are you still using Flash for anything in particular today?**
- **Anything else you want to say?**